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he Royal Italian Opera, have definitely resolved to unite their companies under one roof, and to have but one common interest. Whether it may be possible to found a "happy family" of vocalists under such circumstances may be reasonably doubted. For ourselves, we are inclined to think that the divided feeling which has so long existed will still remain; and that jealousies and feuds which have hitherto smouldered unnoticed, will now be fanned into flame; the retirement of Mr. Costa—who has so largely contributed to raise the character and position of the Royal Italian Opera—being the first step in the disunion of an artistic company which has held together for so many years with honour to the art, if not with profit to the manager. It is now, however, too late to express opinions with any hope of controlling events; for, as we have said, the die is cast; and before these lines reach our readers, Covent Garden Theatre will have opened its doors for the operatic season of 1869. A glance at the company will at once show what enormous strength may be expected in the Operas announced, provided that the vocalists can be persuaded to support each other, instead of simply to display themselves. Madame Adelina Patti, and Madlle. Pauline Lucca, the two great attractions of last season, will be joined this year by Madlle. Titiens, Madlle. Christine Nilsson, Madlle. Ilma di Murska, Madlle. Sinico, and Madlle. Scalchi. No mention is made of Signor Mario; but the tenors include Signori Tamberlik and Mongini, Signor Naudin, and a Signor Corsi, from the principal Italian Operas, his first appearance. The list of baritones and basses is overwhelming; Signori Graziani, Cotogni, Ciampi, Bagagiolo, Tagliafico, and Polonini, of the Royal Italian Opera, being reinforced by Mr. Santley and Signor Foli, from Her Majesty's Theatre. Amongst the Operas to be given during the season we are glad to find that M. Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet*, is likely to be produced, with Madlle. Nilsson as *Ophelia*; and that the talents of Signor Tamberlik and Madlle. Nilsson will be united in the principal parts of Rossini's opera, *Otello*. The chorus will be selected from both establishments, a reform we need scarcely say which will be welcomed by the most conservative subscribers of the Royal Italian Opera; and the conductors are to be Signor Arditì and an indefinite Signor, at present represented by a black line.

[Since writing the above, Madlle. Christine Nilsson has written to the newspapers to say that she declines accepting an engagement under the united operatic management. The opinions we have expressed therefore appear already partially confirmed; for it seems that we must not expect to hear either Madlle. Nilsson or M. Ambroise Thomas *Hamlet* during the present season.]

### CRYSTAL PALACE.

THE Saturday Concerts at this establishment continue to attract crowded audiences. An interesting feature in the programme of the 6th ult., was Spohr's Symphony in C minor (No. 5, Op. 102), which is so full of real beauty that we cannot but wonder at the comparative rarity of its performance. At the same Concert Madame Schumann charmed every hearer by her rendering of Weber's *Concertstück*; and Miss Edith Wynne proved her capacity for interpreting the highest style of sacred music by her excellent singing of the solo in Mendelssohn's Psalm, "Hear my prayer." At the following Concert Mr. Franklin Taylor played with good feeling and execution Mendelssohn's Pianoforte Concerto in G minor. Dr. Bennett's sacred Cantata, *The Woman of Samaria*, has also been given, and with a success which shows how thoroughly it has taken a hold upon the general public. The choruses were sung throughout with a precision rarely attained by the Crystal Palace choir. We should also mention that Miss Marion Severn, a pupil of the Royal Academy of Music, who replaced Miss Lucy Franklein (absent from indisposition), created a marked effect in the contralto air "O Lord, Thou hast searched me out."

### THE ORATORIO CONCERTS.

AT the second of these performances, which was given at St. James's Hall, on the 25th February, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was the work chosen. As we anticipated, the audience on this occasion accepted the *diapason normal* without troubling themselves about testing the number of vibrations per second of any given note; and directing their attention to the beauties of the Oratorio, very properly resigned the question of pitch to those whom it most intimately concerned. Madame Rudersdorff, who sang the very trying soprano part, never acquitted herself so thoroughly well; indeed, we may say that we have scarcely ever heard the music delivered with more truthful feeling, or more faultless execution; the great duet between the widow and Elijah being given with an intensity of pathetic expression which spoke to the hearts of all. The principal contralto part was assigned to Mdle. Drasdil, who sang "O rest in the Lord" so exquisitely as to elicit one of those demands for repetition which all real lovers of music dread. Happily, however, Mr. Barnby thinks with us, and persevered with the following chorus with a reverence for Mendelssohn which could scarcely be shared by those who, despite the destruction to the dramatic effect, still clamoured for the conventional *encore*. Praise must also be awarded to Miss E. Angéle, who sang with much purity of style the expressive air "Woe unto them;" and the unaccompanied trio, given by the three ladies already mentioned, was sung so perfectly in tune, and so thoroughly in the right time, as to produce a marked effect. Herr Carl Stepan, who sang the part of the Prophet, has a magnificent voice, which, if somewhat too ponderous in a few of the *cantabile* phrases, was, nevertheless admirably suited for the declamatory portions of the Oratorio. "Elijah" is not a part to be sung in the sugary style so often adopted by an operatic baritone: both in the grand and fervent appeals for aid, and in the taunts levelled at the Baalite Priests, real power is absolutely necessary; and in all these passages Herr Stepan was highly successful. As a specimen of pure and legitimate expressive singing, we may cite the air, "It is enough," which was thoroughly satisfactory, and proved his undoubted right to be respected as a truthful and earnest artist. Unfortunately, indisposition prevented Mr. Sims Reeves from appearing; and his music was taken, at a short notice, by Mr. Montem Smith, who was received, as he deserved to be, with warm applause, not only for his readiness in supplying an unexpected vacancy, but for the admirable manner in which he gave the two tenor solos, "If with all your hearts" and "Then shall the righteous." The subordinate parts were most effectively filled by Madame E. Cole (who sang, with Miss Angéle, the duet, "Zion spreadeth her hands"), Messrs. Byron, Maybrick, and Whitney. The choruses were given throughout with a decision and intelligence which proved that the utmost attention had been paid by Mr. Barnby to elicit the right meaning, as well as the right notes, of the composer. Independently of the requisite energy in the great choruses of the Baalites, there was a dramatic feeling of alternate hope and despondency expressed in the supplicating notes of the choir, which was highly characteristic of the situation; and the choral recitative, "The deeps afford no water," may also be mentioned as an excellent example of the result of careful training. As may be imagined, the fine tone of the choir, especially of the male voices, came out with grand effect in the noble chorus "Thanks be to God." The orchestra was well selected, and thoroughly efficient; and Mr. Barnby conducted with that earnestness and watchfulness which must entitle him to the highest respect.

The third Concert took place on the 23rd ult., when Handel's *Messiah* was performed. Mr. Sims Reeves was received with applause so strongly marked as to make it apparent that recent events have only tended to deepen the sympathy between himself and his audience. His singing was in every respect so truly perfect, especially in

the opening recitative and air "Comfort ye" and "Ev'ry valley," and in the impassioned air, "Thou shalt break them," as to elicit the warmest demonstrations of approbation, and murmurs for an encore, which we are happy to say were disregarded. Madame Lemmens-Sherrington sang with her usual effect the florid air, "Rejoice greatly," and the truly religious "I know that my Redeemer liveth"; and Miss Julia Elton gave so thoroughly sympathetic a rendering of "He shall feed his flock," as to delight all real Handel lovers. Miss Annie Sinclair made a most favourable impression in "Come unto Him" and "How beautiful are the feet," displaying not only a good voice but a thoroughly trained style. Herr Carl Stepan was unfortunately prevented from singing the bass part, by an attack of hoarseness; but his place was efficiently supplied by Mr. Lewis Thomas and Mr. Winn, the former singing in the first, and the latter in the second, part of the Oratorio. The choruses were all given with excellent effect; and in most cases the points of attack were vigorous and firm, the "Hallelujah" and "All we, like sheep," being especially worthy of commendation. The *obbligato* accompaniment to "The trumpet shall sound," was played by Mr. T. Harper in his usual faultless style, and was much applauded. The room was crowded in every part. Mr. Joseph Barnby conducted, and Mr. F. A. W. Docker occupied his accustomed post at the organ.

#### MISS AGNES ZIMMERMANN'S CONCERT.

THE first of three *Soirées Musicales* was given by this accomplished pianist at the Hanover square Rooms, on the 9th ult., with a success which fully justified us in all that we have from time to time predicted as to the future of an artist so richly endowed and so perfectly trained. Beethoven's *Sonata* (Op. 5, No. 1) for Pianoforte and Violoncello, was excellently played by Miss Zimmermann and Signor Piatti; and an interesting feature in the concert was Handel's Organ Concerto, in B flat (adapted for the pianoforte with much skill by Miss Zimmermann), which was performed by the concert-giver, entirely from memory, with a vigour and finish which almost reconciled us to the want of sustaining power in the instrument for which it had been so carefully arranged. Miss Zimmermann's *Sonata*, in D minor, for Pianoforte and Violin, was played by the composer and Herr Joachim for the first time in public; and the excessive merits, both of the composition and the performance, were acknowledged, as they deserved to be, by the warm applause of a thoroughly musical audience. We have already reviewed this *Sonata* at length in these pages, and have only to add that a hearing of it has more than confirmed all that we then advanced in its favour. As the work of a young composer, it shows not only a power of construction which could scarcely be expected; but there are many snatches of thought which appear somewhat in advance of the requisite power of development, a hopeful sign which may safely be pointed out to one who would more heed friendly counsel than indiscriminate applause. Schumann's Trio, in D minor (Op. 63), for Pianoforte, Violin, and Violoncello, was rendered in faultless style by Miss Zimmermann, Herr Joachim, and Signor Piatti, and concluded an excellent concert to the utmost satisfaction of the audience. Madame Rudersdorff was the solo vocalist, and gave with much effect two of Schumann's Songs, "Abendlied" and "Schöne wiege," and also an exceedingly graceful and most melodious song, by Signor Randegger, called "Peacefully Slumber" (with accompaniments for pianoforte, violin, and violoncello), which was received with marked applause. Mr. Joseph Barnby's Choir increased the interest of the concert by singing a selection of part songs with much delicacy and precision; amongst the most attractive of which were Miss Zimmermann's "To Daffodils" and "Good Morrow," and Mr. G. A. Macfarren's "Three Fishers." The conductors were Mr. Joseph Barnby and Signor Randegger.

#### MR. HENRY LESLIE'S CONCERTS.

THE third of these Concerts took place, on the 4th ult., the programme being well selected, although scarcely relying for its attraction upon the efforts of the choir. An efficient orchestra performed Beethoven's *Symphony*, in C minor, with much effect; and Herr Joachim played Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto as nobody else can hope to do, the last movement, however, being taken at a pace too rapid for everybody but the solo performer, who alone appeared perfectly at his ease. He also played Beethoven's *Romance*, in G, with the most refined expression, and was rewarded with enthusiastic applause, if, indeed, so consummate an artist have not, like Mendelssohn, ceased to consider applause scarcely a reward worth accepting. How the choir sang the grand Psalm of Mendelssohn, "Judge me, O God," and the late Samuel Wesley's fine Motett, "In exitu Israel," it is now unnecessary to say, as we can add nothing to our former oft repeated eulogiums upon the perfection of Mr. Leslie's forces in these two unaccompanied works. Mendelssohn's Psalm was enthusiastically re-demanded. Mdlle. Liebhart was scarcely at home in Mozart's "Voi che sapete." Gounod's *Ave Maria* (engrafted on Bach's first prelude) was much better sung, and, as usual, pleased the audience immensely. The concert concluded with an excellent performance of Beethoven's "Chorus of Dervishes," and the "Turkish March," from the *Ruins of Athens*.

The fourth Concert, on the 18th ult., consisted chiefly of choral, and entirely of sacred, music. A "Sanctus," by Mr. John C. Ward, organist to the choir, which was performed for the first time, can scarcely be judged according to its merits by a single hearing. We may say, however, that it is skillfully constructed, and shows throughout an intimate knowledge of choral effect. An "Ave Maria," by Mr. John Barnett, the composer of the "*Mountain Sylph*" (whose works are now, unfortunately, too seldom heard), was another novelty, and one which we think likely to advance Mr. Barnett's name as a writer of religious music. It is extremely beautiful throughout, and was received with marked applause by the audience. We hope shortly to have another opportunity of hearing a composition of which we can only now briefly record our favourable impression.

#### ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

THE public rehearsals and Students' evening Concerts lately given at this Institution, have exhibited the progress of the pupils in a highly satisfactory manner; the selection of the music in all cases showing that an excellent supervision is exercised in every department of study. The rehearsals are orchestral, as well as vocal; and are ably conducted by Mr. W. G. Cousins: the evening Concerts are exclusively confined to Chamber music. Both performances take place once a month, and are open to Subscribers, Members, and Associates. We hear that a series of lectures will shortly be delivered to the students on various subjects connected with the art. Such unmistakable signs of vitality show that the Academy is resolved to assert its true place as the great National School of Music.

#### ROYAL SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS.

THE 131st Anniversary of this Society was celebrated on the 3rd ult., at the Freemasons' Tavern, the Right Hon. Lord Stanley, M. P., in the chair. The very excellent speech of the Chairman, in proposing the toast, "Prosperity to the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain," was listened to with the utmost interest, and applauded with enthusiasm by the many well-wishers of the Institution who were present; all who were acquainted with the admirable manner in which the Charity is carried on, being fully prepared to endorse the complimentary allusions to the small amount of outlay necessary to carry out the purposes of the Society. Sir J. D. Coleridge (Solicitor General), in proposing the health of the Chairman, made a speech remarkable alike for eloquence and